

# Tobacco-Free Schools in Montana

## Schools & Tobacco

Educators play a critical role in promoting and teaching lifelong healthy behaviors and schools have an important role in shaping tobacco use behaviors.

- Adopt and enforce tobacco-free policies that include off-campus, school-sponsored events.
- Refuse school supplies, curricula, or promotional items from the tobacco industry.
- Refuse sponsorship monies from the tobacco industry for sports, clubs, or other school-related events.

## Montana Students & Tobacco

Surveys of Montana students in grades 9- 12 show both progress and opportunity for reducing tobacco use.

### Successes

- Youth smoking is decreasing – reported smoking of a cigarette on one or more of the past 30 days dropped from 35% in 1999 to 16.5% in 2011.<sup>1</sup>
- The proportion of youth who have ever tried smoking is decreasing – from 70% in 1999 to 44% in 2011.<sup>1</sup>
- 92% of high schools have signs marking a tobacco-free school zone.<sup>2</sup>
- 46% of all Montana Schools have adopted Comprehensive Tobacco Free Policy.

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**Comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policies protects everyone from health risks associated with tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure and are an important factor in decreasing youth tobacco use.**

**Montana law prohibits anyone from using tobacco products in a public school building or on any public school property at any time.**

- Passed by the Montana legislature as part of the 2005 Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA).
- Tobacco products includes but are not limited to cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation.
- The law applies to students, faculty, administrators, as well as janitors, parents, school board members, sports fans, alumni, guests – anyone entering school property at any time.
- School property includes “public school building or public school property” means; any public land, fixtures, buildings, or other property owned, occupied or maintained under the laws of the state of Montana at public expense; and includes school playgrounds, school steps, parking lots, administration buildings, athletic facilities, gymnasiums, locker rooms, and school vehicles.
- School administrators and/or principals (or their designees) have the authority to enforce this law.
- Violators who smoke or use other tobacco products on school property can be fined between \$25 and \$100 (CIAA-Chap. 40 50-40-115).

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## The law provides two exceptions:

- Tobacco products are permitted on school property if they are part of a teacher or administration-sanctioned educational forum, lecture or demonstration lesson about the risks of tobacco use.
- Tobacco products are permitted on school property if they are used as part of an American Indian cultural activity in accordance with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

## Challenges

- In 2011, use of smokeless tobacco products was almost twice as high among Montana youth as among the United States (13.5% versus 7.7%, respectively).<sup>1</sup>
- Students begin using cigarettes before using any other substance; of those who have used cigarettes, the average age of first use is 12.7 years.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost one-fourth (23%) of high school seniors continue to report that they smoke.<sup>1</sup>
- 30% of high school senior boys continue to report that they use smokeless tobacco products.<sup>1</sup>

## Sources

1. Montana Office of Public Instruction – Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2011
2. Montana Office of Public Instruction – Montana School Health Profiles, 2010
3. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Student Survey, State Report, 2010.